595 receive more attention, will get his way more readily -- as among ourselves. These preferences do not give rise to jealousy among brothers as long as they remain within the limits of fairness, which they almost always do.

[556] Some rich men who have a dominant social rank have a means of expressing their preference for one of their daughters, a means which is a demonstration of their wealth and at the same time an assertion of their position. This practice will be described in the article that follows.

The children for their part sincerely love their parents. This love is composed more of respect for the father and of more tenderness for the mother, as is the case among Europeans. The same variants of sentiment, depending on whether the child is a boy or girl, are to be found among the Nkundó. The children may be remiss in their dutiful affection and respect, but these are exceptions due to thoughtlessness, stubbornness, or sudden anger. (1) Here one does

1. For an example see Chapter X, Article VIII.

[152] not encounter the deep discord that among Europeans divides parents and children, nor the coarseness and brutality of which one reads quite often in our newspapers. Among the Nkundó these family dramas are unknown.

[153] Nevertheless, what we have said above does not exclude disobedience. The Nkundó child, too, prefers play to work and freedom to discipline. He tries to shun the commands of his parents which tie him down and keep him from frolicking with his companions. (2)

2. One of the first words learned by a Nkundó child is mbɔ́i, "I don't want to."

Love for the mother is especially deep. No matter how old a Nkundó may be, his feelings of tenderness for her do not decrease; he always remains her child. Whenever he feels pain, disappointment, or sorrow, one word is on his lips: nɔ́ɔya, "mother." Among these

Article II. The Bolfimbé

562 556 178 In the old days, if an extremely rich man wanted to show his affection for one of his daughters and show off his wealth, he made that daughter bolfimbé. Today this custom has almost completely disappeared. (1) It has been almost impossible to maintain the

> 1. On the left bank of the Lulaka it disappeared a good many years ago. The Injólé still followed it until quite recently.

practice because of a greater distribution of wealth and the reduction of leisure due to the work imposed by the white man. This work has been imposed directly in the form of forced labor, labor on roads, economic projects, etc., or indirectly because a sum had to be raised for the payment of taxes. All this has made it more difficult to bring large numbers of people together for ceremonies lasting days and weeks. (2) Nevertheless, the custom must be described here.

> 2. One might suppose that the new uses of wealth made possible by economic development would have contributed to the disappearance of this custom. Theoretically such might have been the case, but in fact these developments were not involved in the change that has been noted.

562 556 [602] When a native wanted his favorite daughter to become bolfimbé, he had first to obtain the consent and financial support of all his kin. Then enormous preparations were made, for everything had to be special -- beverages, various foods, dances. On the date which had been set and made known through messengers to the entire region, an enormous crowd gathered at his house. Public festivities went on day after day. In an address suited to the occasion, he announced to those assembled his intention to set his daughter up as a bolfimbé. Two relatives or two of the father's wives then stripped off the girl's

562 clothing and dressed her in valuable furs, especially in part of the
576 pelt of a striped antelope called mpangé. In some villages she was permitted to wear leopardskin in front as well as in back.

Then the father would decree (-bêkya) that since his daughter had become bolômbé she would always wear furs and would stop working, and that she would be given in marriage only to a very rich and influential man, not to the first comer. Therefore, a synonym for bolômbé is lôna dê bokio, "child of the decree, a child set apart, forbidden."

This ceremony may be held regardless of the child's age, at any time between three years and adolescence.

When the ceremony is ended the girl withdraws (-olama, transitive -ôla) into a hut specially prepared for this occasion, which is called lîeke. Her seclusion lasts only a few months. When certain natural needs oblige her to leave the house, she goes out the back way through the banana grove and hides as much of herself as possible under a mat. She does not walk on the bare ground; her feet must not touch the earth. That is why mats are spread everywhere she steps. She does no work; her food is prepared by her mother, sister, aunt, etc., or by a slave. When it comes to her toilette, she washes her hands not in water, but in palm oil. [32] All these practices are marks of respect and honor.

When the period of seclusion is ended, the girl's father gives a second feast, with dances, drinks, etc., and the bolômbé comes out walking on mats. But there is no further ceremony. From then on the girl is no different from other girls. But she retains the sign of her distinction, the wearing of furs, and she does no housework.

[582] The marriage of a bolômbé always occurred very late, since a
[558] man who wanted to take her for his wife had to collect a good deal of wealth before he could take the risk of asking for her hand. Should his attempt prove fruitless, he was exposed to ridicule in the whole region.

114 Among the tribes living on the left bank of the Lulaka any
556 man who was rich and of good family could ask for the hand of a
562 bolômbé in marriage. Among the Inîsîô, on the other hand, the re-
582 quirements were more complicated. The suitor had to belong to another tribe or group. For instance, a girl who belonged to the

Engɔnjɔ́ group would be given only to a man from the West, the Ngombe, or a neighboring tribe, but never to an Engɔnjɔ́. All the Engɔnjɔ́ considered the boldmbɔ́ their sister. Thus when the future husband went to the family of the boldmbɔ́ to ask for her hand, every village barred his way by means of a fence. All the bride price valuables which he carried with him were taken from him, and an equivalent amount in various kinds of goods, such as hens, ducks, dogs, mats, etc., was substituted for it. That is, he exchanged bride price valuables for okomi valuables [dowry]. (1) The suitor could pass only when the

1. See Chapter II, Article VII.

village that barred his way had nothing left with which to continue the exchange. If he found his riches exhausted, he had to go back home to replenish the supply. Everything he gave in this [by] fashion was counted as bride price, [ring] (1) and everything he received was part of the okomi [dowry]. (2)

1. See Chapter II, Article VIII.

2. See Chapter II, Article VII.

It is understandable that under these conditions asking to marry a boldmbɔ́ was a luxury that the common man could not afford. The suitor had to belong to a rich and influential family all of whose members would assist him.

When the suitor finally succeeded in clearing a passage to the father of the chosen one with sufficient treasures, the latter put no further obstacles in his way. As for the girl, she felt exceedingly honored and delighted that a man loved her so much that he would go to so much trouble and spend such a vast amount out of affection for her.

As for the rest of the proceedings, the bride price payment was made in the same way as for any other marriage. But when the

558 562 582 bride-to-be was introduced to her bridegroom, she walked toward him across a row of mats. A feast was organized to celebrate this important and joyous event. Dances accompanied with a flow of beer went on for weeks, sometimes for a whole month.

[431] The father gave his son-in-law a great many nkomf (3) objects

3. See Chapter II, Article VII.

so that the bolímbó often became yéngaende or at least lifayĕnjoku. (4)

4. See Chapter VII, Article IV.

He did not allow his daughter to leave without giving her at least one ebíla to wait on her. (5) Thus when Bolíngé w'ŏoma of Lokŏndola

5. See Chapter VII, Article III.

(Injólo, Ngombe) married Bonjéngó, daughter of Ilónjé y'Ŏkálema of Bompóma (Injólo, Engónjó) (who died in 1934), the bride received from her father four bibíla to do the work, as well as a young cousin who was to stay with her [34] to bring her firewood. In this way the father made sure that his beloved daughter would retain her honorable position as a great lady.

556 562 The husband, who wanted his wife to retain her superior status, now makes her his bolímbó as well. (1) The term was: lŏn ŏw'olímbó

1. See Chapter VII, Article III. That is, unless she is his first wife. See ibid. and Article I.

ítswá ô wălf ŏw'olímbó ék'ŏma. He would say to those assembled: "Her father proclaimed her bolímbó, and I proclaim her bolímbó as well (ls'ékílé ŏékvíkí, emí mpé njŏ́kya ă ng' ŏkó)."

What was the reason for the existence of this custom?

556 According to the natives it was a public assertion of the father's high
562 social position and at the same time the greatest token of affection he could bestow on his daughter; the two things were inseparable. Not every native had the right to make his daughter a bolémbé. On the contrary, he had to hold an especially prominent rank, that is to say, he had to be a wealthy, influential, and powerful head of a family. All the ceremonies, practices, and rules involved in this institution point in that direction. A comparison with the bolémbé wife (1)

1. See Chapter VII, Article III. Unless she is his first wife. See ibid, and Article I.

lends additional plausibility to this explanation.

556 As we have said, this custom is in the process of disappearing
562 completely. In certain tribes such as the Beloko, subtribe of the
178 Lifumbe, a substitute has actually been introduced. The favored daughter is dressed and adorned as before, except that European materials have replaced the fun. But the public character of the older institution has disappeared. The occasion is not surrounded with so many ceremonies. Finally, the girl is not called bolémbé, for a new name has been invented; it is bondelóóngola, "the white man raises (educates) her." [31]

Article III. Friendship

572 Friendship is not unknown to the Nkundó. It is founded on the same basis as in Europe. I have seen more than one instance of true mutual affection between persons who were in no way related. Among the Blacks with whom I have associated there are some whom I personally consider sincere friends and who have shown me real affection, helped me to the full extent of their powers, and shown me complete confidence. There have even been some who have not been afraid to place themselves in serious difficulties and who have gone so far as to incriminate themselves in order to clear me, thereby exposing themselves to troubles and sanctions.

192 tombe, "to spy"; the former may be an extension of the meaning of
184 the word boloko, "promise." (1)

[572] 1. Note in passing that a ndonga is also necessary for the boeka, or contract of friendship and mutual assistance. (See Chapter I, Part 1, Article III.)

Article III. The Engagement

584 585 1. The payment of the likulé

The engagement begins with the first bride-price payment, which in former times was an arrow and for that reason is called likulé
• [554] or liuld. If the suitor was very rich, he sometimes gave an ingbudé knife or even an empéke. A poorer one would merely give the shaft of an arrow. Nowadays 1 or 2 copper rings are given. But the original name of this payment has been retained.

Arriving at the home of the father of his intended, [112] the suitor, his father (or a substitute for him), the ndonga(s) and often other relatives as well, sit down on one side of the lofonjé (the court in front of a dwelling), after an exchange of the usual courtesies. The girl and the representatives of her family sit down on the opposite side. As in all matters that a Nkundó has to settle, the host begins by inquiring into the reason for the visit. The young man's father answers: "We have come to ask for your daughter for our son." "How do you ask for her?" "We ask for her in marriage." These preliminary negotiations are called simply dwana mango, "to ask each other for news."

Then the girl's father asks: "Who will bring the liéng (bananas) or the bonyéku (partially ripe bananas), that is, the gifts?" Through this figurative expression he asks who has been proposed as ndonga. The young man's father replies: so-and-so, and so-and-so. When they have been accepted, the fiancée's father has bananas, smoked fish, and sometimes hens brought in, and the witness passes them over to the future husband's group.

583[6] 609 These rights prevail even if the nephew has wealth at home. In that case -- which is extremely rare since ordinarily he prefers to remain with his own clan -- he does not make use of them if his uncle has only two or three wives (whom, however, he can inherit), [596] or if other close relatives [136] are in need. For to do so would show a great lack of affection for the family (lɔ́fa), and he would be severely reprimanded.

Because of all that, the nephew (bɔ́nankɔ́nd, "sister's son") sometimes abuses his rights. That is the basis for the following proverbs: ekpí ékumb'ondɔ́ngɔ́ lokombo, "the leopard takes the owner of the hunting enclosure" (that is to say, the hunter); bɔ́nankɔ́nd ékonda nyangɔmpámá wálí nd'ɛ́ŋko, "the nephew abducts the uncle's wife even in his own domain"; bɔ́nankɔ́nd ale ingonja v'álíko, "a nephew is a stick overhead." This last proverb is the Nkundó version of the sword of Damocles.

In short, a nephew has a right to the assistance of his maternal uncle if he settles with him and is adopted by him. Upon the death of his uncles he becomes heir and head of the family. But his rights are second to those of his uncle's brothers, who are also his "mothers." If he remains in his own clan, he receives help and can even obtain the bride price of one of his female cousins born of his mother's okíta. He may even receive part of the inheritance, if it is large. His rights are based on the fact that his uncle was enriched by the valuables given him by the nephew's clan in payment for his sister's marriage.

595[5] 598 Finally, if a young man does not even have any close relatives, because all are deceased, and if for some reason he has no patrimony (because of dissipation, debts, expropriation of the weak by the strong), he is forced to procure the bride price through his own labor: carving, hunting, fishing, setting elephant snares, making traps and hunting enclosures, clearing fields, or, nowadays, working in the service of the Whites. In former times there was also the possibility of war or raids by which he could obtain valuables or prisoners to sell as slaves. The wealth which someone acquires by his own work is called bɔtómbá (bakonga, etc.) bɛ́ mpámbɔ́ngɔ (literally, "by the strength of his arms"). [137]

4. The amount of the walo

[575] Formerly the amount of the walo averaged 20 to 30 bakonga, or their equivalent. The value of any object included in the bride [576] price could be calculated in copper, so that the konya was, so to speak, the monetary unit of the Nkundó.

At the present time in the districts near Flandria, the minimum is from 55 to 60 rings. Among the Bokongó and the Inkóló the rings [577] are noticeably bigger and their weight in copper or brass is greater; there the minimum can be 30 rings. Elsewhere the figure is a good deal higher.

The price of the walo generally exceeds the minimum, which is found rather rarely. The average is about 60 to 80 rings. The number of 200 is reached only in extremely rare cases and it is exceeded even less frequently (see cases given below).

Differences in the amount of the walo are due primarily to the relative wealth of the contracting parties, the husband's valuation of his wife, the greed of the latter's parents, and the size of the bride price demanded for the woman they want to obtain with their daughter's (sister's) bride price. The cases of women who have left their previous husbands also must not be forgotten, for the new bride price must serve to reimburse him.

The amount of the walo may also be increased to satisfy the [578] vanity of the woman, who wants to appear superior to her companions, or of the husband, who wants to be recognized as very wealthy. (1)

> 1. The man who pays a great deal for his wife is given the honorific epithet ntlwilwo, "wells and mushrooms." All can find as much water as they want at wells, and there the mushrooms multiply. Thus many can benefit from the riches brought by the son-in-law.

[579] It is not unusual to hear of a woman boasting in the course of a dispute: "I am not a slave; my husband paid so-and-so much for me. [130] But you -- your husband doesn't love you, or else he is poor, for he paid only so much."

female relative thanks to whom he was able to obtain this wife (see below, Article X). He keeps a small part for himself and, in agreement with his wife, uses it according to his needs. When husband and wife are on good terms, he consults her before giving away or selling any of it. And if she wishes to dispose of any of it, she asks his permission. Thus they work the matter out aimiably. But legally it all belongs to the husband. Should he want to use it for gifts or for any payment of his own, his wife can make no claim; she will not win her case before the law. But from a practical point of view, it is much wiser to come to an agreement in advance and thus avoid any annoyance or quarrel.

The size of the nkomf depends on the wealth of the woman's parents. Not only is a large one a point [152] of honor and esteem; it is also a means of increasing the stability of the marriage and securing harmony. The bigger the nkomf the more obliged the husband is to treat his wife well and see that she is content with him, out of fear of having to return the entire fortune if the marriage should ever be broken.

The nkomf may be very large, even as great or greater than the bride price; in these extreme cases the girl is spoken of as [192] tɔfaya-njoku, for like an elephant (njoku) she goes to live elsewhere (tɔfaya) because of all the riches she carries with her. The term nsɛkwɔbwɔ is also used; literally, it refers to a kind of mushroom which grows in abundance all over the bɔɔdɛ tree. (1)

1. The use of these terms is not specifically confined to the situation described above. They are also applied to any stranger who settles in, or simply passes through, the village, bringing many riches -- to the white men, for example.

With reference to this subject an old custom should be mentioned. Because of his love for his daughter and a desire for renown, a father might give his son-in-law a quantity of bakonga, in varying amounts but enough to pay for the acquisition of a wife, hence bride-price valuables, so to speak.

583 Although given by the father-in-law to his son-in-law and therefore
93] part of the nkomf, yet these valuables have neither their significance
356 nor their purpose. They are disbursed at the time of the payment of the ikuld. This practice was customary only among men who were unusually wealthy and influential, that is, family heads who occupied prominent positions in native society. It was never omitted for a bolómbé (see Chapter I, Part 2, Article II). The woman's father gave these valuables to his son-in-law, saying: "I am giving you my daughter in marriage. She has always occupied a high position; she is of a very good family. I want her to retain her prominent rank. Therefore here is a bride price; go and get yourself a second wife with these rings, so that my daughter will have her nkita [156] from the very first day. Then come back and pay me the bride price for her."

The woman who was honored by such preferential treatment was called yéngaende. This word is composed of the roots éng, "to acquire by means of a bride price," and ende, "a man (viz)." The name comes from the fact that she herself paid the price for her husband, so to speak, and did so even before he paid the bride price for her.

The Nkundó have given up this manner of ostentatiously dis-
[18] playing their wealth, so that the custom we have just described now
[55] belongs to the past. Nevertheless there are still women who bear the name Yéngaende, in memory of some ancestor who had been the object of this honor which put her in a privileged position, a royal position, so to speak.

589 From all the foregoing it will be apparent that marriage payments are not unilateral in Nkundó law and practice. Rather, there is a mutual handing over of goods. Although the goods given by each party differ clearly from one another, they all have an economic and financial value. Therefore we can speak of a real reciprocity in these payments. And although the husband has to furnish the largest and highest amount, it would be wrong to say that he alone must "pay for his spouse," for though he does actually "pay for his wife," she must to a certain extent "pay for her husband." That is what the

584 safeguard freedom, and the impression should not be given that childhood unions are encouraged -- as it sometimes is -- by the exemption of immature wives of polygamists from a supplementary tax.

There is no law requiring an elder sister to be married before a younger one, but such is the common practice. Exceptions are made only under certain circumstances, and particularly if the younger girl finds a suitor earlier than the older one, a reason which includes and sums up all the others (such as disadvantageous physical and psychological tendencies of the older sister).

178 584 This practice of marrying daughters off before maturity is beginning to change because of the increase in freedom which has been introduced by colonization. Nevertheless, as this change is not especially advantageous [236] its manifestations are still very slight. The Christian education of parents must of necessity delay the time of the daughter's marriage and will do so ipso facto as soon as Christian influence becomes sufficiently strong in the region.

Article II. Boys

582 Except in the rare instances of an engagement of two young children, it was formerly the common and normal practice for men to remain bachelors for many years after puberty. The old men tended first to their own wants, and the youths had to wait their turn, like their elders. This was considered entirely natural. Later on they could establish a home and "profit" from life. Meanwhile they found a little compensation with the wives of certain relatives or of others, if the opportunity arose.

582 54 To explain this state of affairs we can invoke the political organization of Nkundó society, which is based on age. It is therefore natural that those possessing authority should have its external • [556] signs, and one of the foremost of these is the wealth manifested in the possession of wives. But, as we will point out later, the present situation greatly weakens this explanation.

582 583 It is more natural to consider the delay in the marriage of young men a logical consequence of the marriage of girls at an early age. Suppose that a boy is fifteen years old while his sister,

573a 574 Otswɛkɛ lɔfɔa otswɛkɛ'olɛ, bɔfɔkɔlaka mbɔkɛ'ɛy'olɛ la ngɔm'a nkolɛ, "If you are married go back to your parents, or you will be taught the way with drums and gongs," that is, "when you are dead." (2)

[604] [605] 534f

2. A woman is buried in her own native clan. Her corpse is transported there to the accompaniment of drums and horns. The lokolɛ gong announces her death.

573x 602 A married woman may not evade the duty of helping her relatives under special circumstances (pregnancy, illness, serious accidents, death). This obligation [285] is not limited to her mother and father, but extends to all her relatives; the closer the degree of kinship, the stricter the obligation.

Besides, love of family is sufficiently developed so that there is no danger of the woman forgetting herself too much in this realm. [626] And a husband who would like to prevent her from fulfilling these elementary duties would be much criticised by all and should expect a dissolution of the marriage.

573A 574 392 532 It was said above that a husband builds a hut for his wife. His relatives often assist him in this task. But it also happened -- in the past, for colonization has removed the possibility of it -- that the woman's father wanted to build his daughter's house himself or at least to make the pavement out of clay brought from her native land. This act was a demonstration of wealth and politico-social importance as well as proof of fatherly affection. The husband, for his part, was honored to have married the daughter of such an important man and loved her all the more. Thus a number of women say that "they only cooked on ancestral soil." This soil was brought in baskets across distances up to 50 kilometers by Batswa and by men of the woman's clan or village. Her father could do it because of his great influence and regal rewards (lɔkɔlɔlɔ, verb kɔnda) were distributed during a feast (ongɔ) given for the workers and their relatives after the task was completed. This was done for Bompɛli, daughter of Bokombe of Litɛlɛ (Bombwanja) married to Bonyɛmɛ w'enyuka of the Basɔkɛ Mbangɛ (Bonkɔnɔ); for Beluka, daughter of

593 Iongo of Bokákyé (Boselo, Bombwanja), married to Bokaa is Tfonda
594 of Bowélé; for Mbalaka, daughter of Bolekela wa Imangaiso of the
592 Basóká Lokuli (Bongili), married to Mbuli is'ea Wela of Bombóngo
538 w'Etefa (Bongale) (1) [286]

[531] 1. She bore the name of Mbólaka (meaning indemnity), because her father had solemnly proclaimed (-bóka) and publicly promised that he intended, one day, to place himself in the position of having to pay an indemnity because of his daughter, as proof of his love. Indeed [782] when Mbólaka was married, he killed one of his wives, cut her into pieces, and sent the "meat" to his son-in-law as "the first hen" that his wife would prepare for him. But he did not have to pay [442] [444] the indemnity because the victim's clan was too weak to attempt a war; they did not dare to make a claim and, in order to avoid even greater misfortunes, they resigned themselves to this revolting ignominy.

Article V

Relations Between the Husband and His Wife's Family

606 As has already been said, kinship by marriage is called lilíló,
607 and relatives by marriage are called bokíló, lokíló. Mbótsolé is a term of respect for very close relatives by marriage (father-in-law, mother-in-law, sometimes brother-in-law or sister-in-law). When there is a considerable age difference between two affinal relatives, the elder one sometimes calls the younger bokílówalé. This happens more frequently when the son-in-law is so young that he can still be considered a child. This term can even be used by an elder brother

595 Some men are strict on this point, while others are more tolerant.
837 Clearly, the technique of such men is most subtle. The more a wife's lover is permitted his freedom, the greater is the likelihood that other women, who prefer a young man passionately enamoured of them to their husband, will ask the polygamist to marry them. A
● [552] man who is sufficiently wealthy and influential can in this manner build up a harem from which he does not benefit physically but which assures him of a dominant social position.

This practice exists almost exclusively in conjunction with polygamy, but cases do occur among monogamists. And among more "civilized" tribes, such as the riverain people of the Lower Congo, a tendency in that direction is developing.

A request for concubinate made by a relative of the husband cannot be considered in the same category with the situation we have just examined. Such a request is more closely related to the request for an inherited wife (see Chapter III, Article II). The difference is obvious. The only thing the two situations have in common is the fact of legitimate cohabitation with another man's wife. One perceives this immediately upon comparing the two.

Article IX. The Family's Role in Marriage

596 We have found that there are situations in which a woman is
R1 to some extent considered and treated as the wife not only of her husband, but also of certain of his relatives (Article VI). Moreover, we have seen in Chapter II the big role that the families play in the arrangement and continuation of their children's marriage. In discussing the question of the inheritance of wives, we have seen that the close relatives of the deceased have rights over the widow: one of them may marry her without any obligations toward the chief heir, and the new union is not a new marriage but a continuation of the previous marriage, which is not broken in spite of the first husband's death. A similar observation was made in relation to the practice of wife replacement (Chapter III, Article IV).

All this leads us to raise a question: To what extent does the family have collective rights over the wife? The following answer is

595x magic known as yoli. She alone participates in the ceremonies
789 that accompany it; with her husband she eats half of the hen that has been killed for that purpose, and on that night she alone may share his bed. Finally, only with her, to the exclusion of the co-wives, may the husband eat the fish called wengé, and only she may and must burn the leavings. Otherwise the magical practice would turn against its owner.

595x When a piece of game is divided, the bomátsa is entitled
[774] to the lintúla (the lower portion of the breast), which would go to the man's mother (or his father's or his elder brother's wife) were he a bachelor.

In the bomátsa's absence, her place is taken by her ebísa (see below, Article IV) or by the wife who follows her in seniority. At her death, the same rules govern her succession.

The name bomátsa is probably derived from the root mátsa, "to begin." She is the one who founds the family. Sometimes she is also called ikókyónjemba, literally "bachelor's love." The Bombwanja say itókyónjemba (the Ekonda, nkímukolo).

In addition to the bomátsa, reference is sometimes made to
[344] bomátsa w'ílí, or "bomátsa of the left." The bomátsa in the strict sense of the term is contrasted to the latter as bomátsa w'ílóme ("of the right"). The bomátsa of the left is a polygamist's second
[572] wife. She is given this name because her house is at the left end of the lofnjé. She has no special rights or duties, however, unless the actual bomátsa delegates to her the task of looking after her end of the compound. If the harem is large, the husband may set aside
[224] for her a special portion of the game, called itómbantúta, or nape of the neck. In her absence it goes to the eldest daughter.

Article II. The Favorite

595A All polygamists of any importance have a favorite wife, or
● 556 nkónde. But only the rich and the notables have a true nkónde. The minor polygamists, of course, imitate the others (nkónde éé wéélí or éé ínsí, "without great importance"), but they do so without

great ceremonies because they lack the necessary wealth.

The bomɛ̂tsa is never nkɔ́ndɛ́. But before he makes one of his wives a nkɔ́ndɛ́ a husband must ask the advice and approval of the bomɛ̂tsa. For that purpose he presents her with a bompɛ́ngɛ́ (a dog, a goat, some rings), which expresses his recognition of her right and authority and at the same time is intended to secure a favorable response. If the bomɛ̂tsa does not agree, the matter is not followed through. But that situation is only hypothetical. In practice the bomɛ̂tsa yields to her husband's preferences, since he has recognized her rights in the proper fashion.

When a husband wants to create a nkɔ́ndɛ́, he first makes all the preparations, brews the sugar-cane beer and collects all the riches that are to be distributed. Then he invites the neighboring villages and calls together his relatives. On the assigned day, the assembly having gathered, the chosen wife puts on her most beautiful garments and adorns herself with her richest ornaments. She seats herself on a magnificent bofinga [345] (a portable couch) (1)

1. See the excellent drawing in Engels, Les Wangata [The Wangata], (Revue Congolaise, Vol. 1, no. 4, p. 483, 1910).

in front of the audience. Her husband then announces to those assembled that henceforth this woman is to be his favorite; woe unto the man who has the temerity to seduce her or even show affection toward her -- he will be a dead man (or he will have to pay an enormous indemnity of 25 to 50 bakonga). In the past it often happened that a seducer was killed or reduced to slavery without further ado. When the husband has paid 25 rings or more to the wife's family and gifts have been distributed to the assembled patriarchs, his words are ratified by the assembly, and henceforth the contract between them and the husband is sealed. Dances, song, and drink follow.

The favorite wears no special garb. She wears the same clothing as all the other women and wears furs only for dances.

She does no work in the farm or kitchen. She always has an eblsa to wait on her. If her family has no member they can let her have, she will borrow an eblsa from a distant relative or a friend.

A nkɔ̄ndɛ́ does not travel on foot; she is carried in a hammock (hunting net). Her husband accompanies her on foot, however. But this was done only for a true nkɔ̄ndɛ́ of a rich man, and the custom is disappearing today.

A favorite may not leave her husband, even to go and see her parents. In the past some men were so jealous of their favorites that they would not allow them to satisfy even their most private needs unless they themselves or some sentinel (usually a Botswɛ́) stood watch. A man could not even go into the vicinity of her hut, which is built just behind the husband's shed. For although the husband is sometimes tolerant of the passions of his other wives, he always shows an intransigeant jealousy [346] in relation to his favorite. He never travels without having her accompany him.

The favorite has the honor of performing small personal services for her husband; she cuts his hair, helps him in the removal of body hair, scratches his pustules from ringworm or prickly heat, anoints him with oil, paints him with ngɔ́la, and, in a word, performs all the tasks connected with his appearance and hygiene.

Out of love for his favorite, her husband can buy her corpse for the price of a slave (in kind or in money). By doing so he obtains the right to have it buried beside his own while those of the other wives must be buried with their native clans. That is why in some regions a husband calls his favorite his ikundaka (from kunda "to bury"). Nevertheless, if her husband dies before she does, his heirs may not trouble themselves about his wishes and no longer require that the favorite be buried in their cemetery. That is what happened to Bongɔ́la of Bongɔ́li, whose husband Ikilinganya of Bongangɛ́ (Bokɔ́ndɛ́) had paid the price of two slaves for this right. When the husband has killed large game, the favorite, like the bomɔ́tsa, has the right to receive her personal predetermined portion (boando). Her part is the neck or a chop, which in her absence, goes to the sons or their wives. The other wives do not have the same right; each one obtains only an ordinary piece (lioɔdo).

595 man who corresponds better to her heart's desires. In the past, at least in small-scale polygamy, the situation was not the same as it is today. Because of the constraint of traditional laws, limited freedom, lack of good communications, a husband's respect for his young wife's body and the lack of venereal diseases, conditions must have been much more favorable to the birth rate. [370]

Article X. Causes of Polygamy

Under this title we can deal with two quite different and distinct things: 1) the motives that push the Nkundó toward polygamy; 2) the causes that led to the origin of that practice.

The first question can be answered through a methodical observation of facts. The second, on the contrary, is in the realm of history. Thus the two do not coincide in any way, and it would be a mistake to confuse them.

Only the ethnographic problem falls within the framework of this study. But our conclusions can help to explain the historical documents, if any exist, or to clarify a hypothesis concerning the origin of the practice in the past.

What are the reasons by which the Nkundó justify practicing polygamy? They are: 1) social influence, 2) fame, 3) concern over keeping the capital in the family, 4) precautions against a wife's illness, death, or divorce, and 5) the desire to increase the number of children.

595 1) A man's social influence grows in proportion to the
● 596 number of his wives, for they and their children's marriages increase the number of his affinal relationships with other clans. These strengthen his military position. Furthermore, through the system of official concubinage -- which is impossible in a monogamous system -- he can secure dependents.

The more wives a man has, the more he is respected, listened to, and feared. This correlation is neither necessary nor infallible, however, for a polygamist of weak character may have

less influence than a monogamist or bigamist who is intelligent and fearless. And in the present circumstances one meets monogamists who, because of either their economic situation or their social or political position, enjoy a much greater authority [371] than many polygamists. Intellectual and moral superiority on their part is beginning to make its value felt.

2) Fame and vanity. Because of the very nature of the marriage system, which is intimately bound to -- not to say based on -- financial transactions, the number of wives determines the extent of a man's wealth. And here as everywhere wealth has a fascination; it is considered a mark of superiority. Vanity seizes upon it. And since the possession of wives is the most obvious expression of wealth, the Nkundó see it as a superior means by which to acquire great renown and an illustrious name.

3) A concern over keeping the capital in the family. Personal wealth consists almost entirely of metals (especially copper) and domestic animals. Thus this is the capital involved in the financial transactions accompanying marriage, and in that way it is invested with interest (children, work, influence).

Like all pagan people the Nkundó are essentially covetous and egoistic. They do not like to give but want everything for themselves. Except for persons to whom he is bound by natural ties or sincere affection, a Nkundó does not help others except through interdependence or in the hope of reciprocity in some *form or other. Thus when he possesses an excess* of wealth, even if it is considerable and entirely superfluous, he does not yield it. The idea would never occur to him to give a few copper rings to an indigent bachelor, for example, if he is not forced to do so because of interdependence in the family. Thus, if there are more girls than boys, the excess bride price will be used by him to augment the number of his own wives. For in order that his daughter not be deprived of her nkita, the bride price received must be used again as a bride price. Note that this reasoning has but a limited validity. It is a fact that the ancient custom [372] was for the father to take all his daughters' bride prices for himself, as we have seen in Chapter IV. He did not become polygamous because of excess [bride price]; he was polygamous before his sons married.

595x 556 Even if a fortune was acquired through a man's own efforts, he would reproach himself if he did not make productive use of it for himself. And under the circumstances the surest investment is in a harem.

Finally, since a wife represents financial value, the Nkundó likes to inherit those of his deceased relatives in order to incorporate them in his own harem or to obtain the means of enlarging it by means of them.

That is the explanation for the Nkundó statement that the wealth of the family (lokutu) cannot pass into the hands of strangers. It is not only a personal desire that impels them to act in that manner; but they feel the collective will of the family behind them. And in this will, as well as in the reprimands and the teasing which are inevitably the consequences of a more independent attitude, lies one of the chief causes of so much backsliding on the part of men who seem permanently won over to the practice of monogamy.

595x 4) A precaution against accidents, such as illness, death, or divorce. This reason is often given: "What would I do," they say, "if I had only one wife, and one day she fell ill, left me, or died? I would be alone. There would be no one to take care of me or feed me. The Whites have their "boys," but we Blacks have only our wives." This reasoning is not without validity, but it does not seem to express the whole truth for, although nothing surpasses his own home for meals, a bachelor can always count on the kind assistance of his female relatives and sisters-in-law. The chief argument is more from the sexual angle. [373] It is not unusual to find women who advise their husbands to take a second wife for that reason. In case of divorce or death the difficulty can be solved through remarriage. But this imposes a certain delay for the collection of bride-price valuables and, above all, for the negotiations. In the case of illness the difficulty is much greater.

In any case, such accidents cannot justify true polygamy, for bigamy or trigamy would be quite sufficient to avoid the inconveniences cited. And yet no one seems to be satisfied with two or three wives when he has the means to acquire more.

345 puberty, by his father. The performance of this role entails continence (bokeka) for the person who undertakes it, even with respect to the spouse. A violation of this rule prevents healing of the wound or at least makes the process very long and difficult. (1)

[155] 1. A similar bokeka applies to anyone nursing a large gangrenous ulcer (wĭlĭ).

The foreskin that has been cut off is dried on the bolĭkó (tray or shelf). Then no one bothers with it any longer, and it usually remains there, dusty and dirty, for an indefinite period of time if the rats leave it alone.

In the centers the young people are beginning to neglect [177] the native skilled in circumcising and resort instead to European surgeons.

Circumcision is not an occasion for feasts or ceremonies. [54] Sometimes a man who is rich and vain will give a feast, but this is not at all a common practice.

The term "to circumcise" is translated in Lonkundo as tĭna bongé, "to cut off the foreskin." The less vulgar term and one used much more frequently is tĭna mónyé, "to cut off the tip." A much too decent circumlocution is tĭna bɛ́tɔ́l, "to cut off the ears."

The reason for this custom has already been given in Chapter I, Part II, Article II, 2.

Article VIII. Education

From an early age a Nkundó child must perform various 368 small services for his parents, especially in the household; he is 357 asked to draw water, fetch firewood, take care of a little brother or sister, etc. The demands for such services are addressed chiefly to girls, but boys are not at all exempt. By the very nature of things, however, the latter are less frequently asked to help.

Quite early a boy may accompany his father on trips, at meetings, legal debates, etc. The father makes a bow and arrows for him and teaches him the art of using them. The great pastime

the same rights as the other children of the polygynist.

The polygynist always sought to increase the number of his wives, for his prestige rose and his fortune increased in that manner. If anyone in civilized lands seeks to enlarge his fortune, this is done, people say, in order to insure the future of his children. The native thinks little about that; his primary idea is to enjoy himself and to surpass others in prestige and esteem. As far as the future of his children is concerned, there are polygynists who possess twenty or thirty wives or even more, and sometimes they have only one or two children. Also it is little in keeping with their notions to care for the future; he who is still alive tomorrow must take care of tomorrow then, so they reason. On the contrary, instead of caring for his children, the polygynist often took great trouble to obtain a wife for his son. The son, however, was not yet the owner of his wife; it was, so to speak, only a loan. Not until after the death of his father did he become owner. In some districts, when the father had obtained a wife for his son, he first kept this wife for some time for himself. Only after a few months did he give her to his son. In other districts, when the wife was pregnant by the son, he was obliged to send her for a few days to his father. He was not allowed to bear the honor of fatherhood alone; his father must share that with him. The father reserved for himself the honor of naming all of the children of his children. In some areas of the Congo, morals were so low and common that the father even kept his own daughters in his harem. This did not occur in Equatorial Africa, but there was a custom that was not much better. The magician was sometimes consulted about the bride price which the father tried to get for his daughter, or the brother for his sister.

The magician then gave them the advice that they themselves should first have relations with their own daughter or sister. This custom existed almost everywhere in Equatorial Africa.

[531] Bride Price. In general, the daughter was given in marriage upon payment of a bride price. The father had little choice of the future husband of his daughter. The one who guaranteed the most goods in payment was certain to get her. Since, in most cases, the little daughter had not yet arrived at the years of maturity, there was naturally no question of her consent. The bride price was not paid all at once, but gradually during the years while the daughter grew up. Since the daughter was given without her consent

[516] invading groups of kindreds there was always one who was considered as the family head, and this man could claim the title of *mwene mukanda*, the owner of the land. Round this man the rest of the members of the family group clustered, and he had the general direction of their affairs. He could scarcely be termed a chief, having a paternal oversight rather than exercising any wide authority demanding organising ability and political astuteness. The succession of *mwene mukanda* runs collaterally through younger brothers in the first place; hence if a first-born male happens to hold that position, the succession among his younger brothers is in the order of their birth. When these have all died the succession passes to the next generation. If all the males of a group die, it is possible for a daughter's son to leave his father's side in order to assume the position of *mwene mukanda* on his mother's side.

A *mwene mukanda* can delegate his duties as head to another member of the family, who is then termed *mukwi o nka*, the husband of the settlement. For such a privilege payment is generally made to the *mwene mukanda*. Round these *mwene mukanda* and their immediate kinsmen others gathered, forming, it may be, another section of the same settlement, known then as an *etoko*, or, if numerous, another settlement.[1]

[524] [523] The *mwene mukanda* (or *mukwi o nka*) hears and judges cases that come to him, aided always by a group of elders, and directs the activities of the settlement. However, this does not entirely satisfy the Tumba; they want an *nkumu* also. The *nkumu* is chosen, not by the whole settlement, but by a single village, or it may be even one *etoko* of a village. If the villagers of a settlement were without an *nkumu* it would generally, but not necessarily, be the *etoko* of the *mwene mukanda* which would lead off by seeking one out. The group desiring an *nkumu* are known as the *mokanda*, and they look about for a man of the same tribe but not of the same settlement or village, an outsider. He must be a man of some wealth, for actually he will buy his right of authority and pay heavily for it. If the man who is approached accepts, he is known from then on until his accession as *Nkumu Akudo*, the term *nkumu* not being used until he is finally invested with the insignia of office, the *mentula*, or hat of special design. *Nkumu Akudo's* family is known as the *ekapa*, or *mungu*. This man, once having accepted the invitation to become *nkumu*, sets about amassing wealth in the form of wives and brass rods. He may be years about it, but he does not thereby forfeit his right to the office, nor apparently weary those who extended the invitation. Should *Nkumu Akudo* die before he is installed as *nkumu*, or should he wish to withdraw from the honour bestowed upon him, the succession passes to another member of his *ekapa*. The succession would normally pass to the eldest male of the *ekapa*, but many circumstances may interfere to give it to another member of the family. A dream dreamed by a male of the *ekapa* to the effect that he should be the *nkumu* is sufficient to give him the right of succession over the eldest male. When asked whether it was common to be shown such a dream having occurred, in order to gain the right of succession, those questioned received the suggestion with emphatic negatives, for this is no thing to lie; any man so doing would be seen to do, and the *kuna of death* would [illegible]

[554] [718] [638]

[1] Where practical, the reverend chiefs are up by the Belgian Colonial Government are now chosen because of their right to be known as *mwene mukanda* or *mukwi o nka*. Often, however, the same are so small and lacking in cohesion that it has been necessary to set up chiefs artificially over confederacies very much larger than were their hereditary spheres of influence.

customary manner, with a double clap. They are told by the *nkumu* to repeat the salutation, and having done so may be asked to do it a third time. They are then given a few rods in payment. If the *nkumu* sees some member of his own *ekpe* coming to greet him, he gives him special honour by ordering him to lie flat on his back instead of merely sitting, and at the end he gives him a larger gift of rods than the others receive. In this way the *nkumu* may pay out a great many rods to those who thus render him homage. Ordinarily a man will receive five or six, but one specially honoured may be given as many as twenty. From the beginning the *nkumu* has to pay heavily for his honours, and only a wealthy man can hope to attain them. For this reason a lawful successor, if not wealthy, may be glad to give up his rights to another more fortunate member of the *ekpe*. Homage having been paid, word is sent out that the *nkumu* is about to come forth, and crowds begin to gather. A coat of red camwood powder mixed with oil is smeared over the *nkumu*, the brass plates are attached to his *mantoh*, and he is attired in all his finery. The crowd outside clamours, and when tired sits on the ground to await the rest of the ceremony. Inside, the *bikondi* begin to play, the *nyimbo* to sing, and the *Bawa ateti* to praise the *nkumu* by uttering an ululating sound. Accompanied by *Nsow*, *Bikpe*, and the *mamy*, the *nkumu* himself begins to dance. The temporary protecting screen round the *ijaw* is pulled down, and he is seen by all. After his dance he retires again and the crowd disperses.

When *Nkowo Akado* becomes *nkumu* he changes everything possible so as to become different from other men. Thus he assumes a different gait, a sort of low-legged waddle, a different tone of voice, and it seems that under this influence even his facial features undergo a change. Accompanied by his retinue, he visits the various villages where he has friends and relatives in order to greet them. This over, the musicians wish to take their departure and are paid for their services by the *nkumu*.

At the conclusion of these ceremonies the *nkumu* with his *ekpe* and the *mokonde* negotiate concerning their obligations to one another. If the *nkumu* is the first of his line, he and his *ekpe* are given land to cultivate, while succeeding *nkumu* simply take over the land originally acquired. The *mokonde* call their *nkumu* their wife, and they designate themselves husband. They thus reckon the relationship between *mokonde* and *ekpe* to be that of husband and wife, and, as in an actual marriage, there must be an interchange of obligations performed in a spirit of harmony. Also, as in marriage a wife may be divorced, so an *nkumu* with his *ekpe* could be sent off to their home and the arrangement terminated. It not infrequently happened that as strangers the *ekpe* fell out with their hosts and if such a disagreement could not be righted they might be refunded the payments with which they had purchased their rights, and sent off home.

Among the reciprocal obligations of *mokonde* and *ekpe* are included the sharing of certain animals and birds killed in the hunt, among which are the leopard and elephant. All killed, whether male or female, must be divided. Of certain other animals, including the wild pig, antelope, and buffalo, if a female, no portion is given, if a male, the required portion is presented. These reciprocal obligations are limited entirely to the *ekpe* and *mokonde*; if others outside of these groups wish to present the *nkumu* with game to honour him or to curry favour, they may do so, but they are under

G24 An *nkumu* can never walk alone, but must always be accompanied by others, and
[478] on no occasion whatsoever may he run. Even though he never washes, if he is out
in the rain and sees everybody else hurrying for shelter, he will not quicken his pace.
[513] His movements must be slow and deliberate. The *nkumu* never sleeps alone; waking
and sleeping he is attended by someone. But apart from this he is free to go where he
wishes. The *nkumu* is not indiscriminate, as others may be, in his private habits, but
[514] must use his own latrine at all times, and if travelling must have his own latrine in
[556] each place where he stays. The inland *nkumu* frequently take advantage of this custom
by hiding their accumulated beam rods at the bottom of a freshly dug latrine. Such
hidden wealth will be acquired by an inheritor at the decease of the *nkumu*.

In speaking of himself the *nkumu* never refers to himself by his title but always
by his own name.

G24 The couch upon which the *nkumu* sits or reclines during the daytime may not be
352 shared indiscriminately with others, but those permitted to sit upon it at the same
time as the *nkumu* are *mamei*, women, and Barwa. The reservation of this couch for
[562] the use of the *nkumu* is not surprising, but the exceptions are. One explanation given
563] was that women and Barwa are not *koto ke nu*, persons in particular; they do not
count for anything in the social life of the community; they are not really 'people'.
[672] Another explanation was that they do not pay fines, this being tantamount to saying
that they are exempt from laws and therefore cannot break laws even by doing what
would be for others an illegal act. The stool of the *nkumu*, however, has closer
restrictions in the manner of its use. Besides the *nkumu* only two others may sit upon
it, *Nsano* and *Mpenge*. It is always carried by one of his wives, though not necessarily
by any special one.

G24 The restrictions concerning the food of the *nkumu* are many. He may eat food
262 only in his own house, or, if on a journey, in one given over for his use. He may not
enter another house to partake of food even if invited to do so. Likewise the *nkumu*
may not eat in the forest, or eat or drink anywhere along the road when on a journey,
but must wait until he arrives at a village and has a house at his disposal in order to
partake of food and drink. He never 'sleeps with hunger'; even if a wife or child
should die causing him great sorrow he must partake of food before going to sleep.
[765] The Bonginda *nkumu* must never go into mourning, and death must be ignored by
them, but the inland *nkumu* are permitted to mourn. All food carried to an *nkumu*
must be covered, this rule even applying to water. Food must not be placed in a
basket with high sides (*ekoko*), but in a shallow one (*mpunde*), and no food that has
been kept overnight in a pot may be eaten by him: swelling of the abdomen will
result. Various foods are taboo, among these all fast-moving snakes, though slow-
[829] moving ones may be eaten; light-coloured palm-nuts may not be eaten, and a variety
of yam known as *nsukiki* is shunned, for it is with the tough stems of the *nsukiki*
that the dying body of the *nkumu* will be bound to ensure the sitting posture necessary
for burial.

G24 Among regulations roughly classed as social, we have already covered several in
[623] references above, and have referred to the *nkumu* in council. It may be added here that
he is expected to agree with the majority of the councillors and not fall out with them.
[697] The rules affecting the *mogo* of the *nkumu* are accompanied by severe penalties. There
must not be any fighting; if anger is aroused to the point of blows the antagonists